

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAGU 02361 231748Z
ACTION ARA-14

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R 231645Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6649

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CARR, PINT, SHUM, NU
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SIGNS OF MOVMENT IN CHARITON CASE?

REF: A) MANAGUA 2211, B) MANAGUA 2212

1. OSCAR SEVILLA SACASA, PRESIDENT OF BANCO DE CENTRO-AMERICA, INFORMED EMBASSY LATE LAST WEEK THAT THE BANK'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAD FILAED IN ITS MAY 18 MEETING TO REACH ANY AGREEMENT ON OFFER OF FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT WHICH CHARITON'S FAMILY AND ATTORNEY HAD MADE (REFTELS). SEVILLA INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD TRY TO BRING THE MATTER CLOSER TO A SOLUTION BY THE END OF THIS WEEK. (COMMENT: IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER SEVILLA MEANT THAT THE BANK WOULD LOWER ITS DEMANDS, CURRENTLY \$250,000 PLUS CHARITON'S PLANE, OR COME UP WITH AN ALTERNATIVE FORMULA FOR A FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT.)

2. AMBASSADOR RAISED THE CHARITON CASE REPEATEDLY WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA DURING COURSE OF LENGTHY PRIVATE LUNCHEON ON MAY 19. AMBASSADOR REMINDED SOMOZA THAT WITHIN A WEEK ONE YEAR WILL HAVE ELAPSED SINCE CHARITON'S ARREST (ON MAY 25, 1977) WITHOUT THE LATTER HAVING HAD HIS DAY IN COURT, THAT THERE IS CONTINUED HEAVY U.S. CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN THE CASE, THAT SECRETARY VANCE HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE CASE,
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AND THAT U.S. MEDIA HAVE SEVERELY CRITICIZED THE HDNDLING OF THE CASE BY BOTH THE GON AND THE USG. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT WE HOPE FOR A SPEEDY RESOLUTION OF THE MATTER, WHICH WOULD BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH NICARAGUAN LAW.

3. SOMOZA INITIALLY RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT, ALTHOUGH

HE TOO WAS INTERESTED IN SEEING THE CHARITON AFFAIR RESOLVED, HE WAS BOTHERED BY THE ALLEGED FACTS THAT CHARITON IS A CROOK AND THAT "THESE PEOPLE (HAD) SWINDLED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS" FROM HIS BANK. (COMMENT: SOMOZA WAS PRESUMABLY REFERRING TO ROBERTO PATAKY, WINSTON CHURCHILL DINDIAL AND CERTAIN BANK EMPLOYEES, AS WELL AS CHARITON, WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF DEFRAUDING THAT BANK.)

4. THE AMBASSADOR CAUTIONED SOMOZA THAT WE WERE CONCERNED THAT CHARITON MIGHT DO SOMETHING DESPERATE, SUCH AS ATTEMPT SUICIDE. (COMMENT: CONSULAR OFFICER WHO VISITED CHARITON IN THE MILITARY HOSPITAL ON MAY 17 NOTED THAT LATTER APPEARED VERY DEPRESSED AND SPOKE ABOUT DOING SOMETHING--UNSPECIFIED--TO AVOID STAYING IN CUSTODY INDEFINITELY. CHARITON HAS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS THREATENED TO COMMIT SUICIDE IF NO RESOLUTION OF HIS CASE APPEARED TO BE FORTHCOMING.) SOMOZA SAID THAT HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT CHARITON CAN BE PREVENTED FROM TRYING TO KILL HIMSELF, BUT AGREED WITH THE AMBASSADOR THA CHARITON'S SUICIDE WOULD BE A TRIGIC DEVELOPMENT. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT GUARDS SEEM TO BE WITH CHARITON AT ALL TIMES AND THAT EMBOFFS ALERTED HOSPITAL OFFICIALS UPON CHARITON'S RETURN TO CUSTODY APRIL 4 TO BE ON GUARD AGAINST ANY SUICIDE ATTEMPT.)
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5. AT THE CLOSE OF THEIR MEETING, SOMOZA TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT HE "WOULD TRY TO SOLVE THE PRBLEM." SOMOZA DID NOT, HOWEVER, INDICATE WHAT FORM A SOLUTION MIGHT TAKE.

6. EMBOFF INFORMED CHARITON MAY 19 THAT SEVILLA HAD PROMOSD TO TRY TO MOVE MATTERS CLOSER TO A SOLUTION AND THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD DISCUSSED CHARITON'S CASE WITH A VERY HIGH LEVEL OFFICIAL WHO HAD UNDERTAKEN TO TRY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM. EMBOFF CAUTIONED CHARITON NOT TO LIFT HIS HOPES TOO HIGH SINCE WE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER A SOLUTION MIGHT BE REACHED, OR WHAT ANY PRPOSED SOLUTION MIGHT BE. CHARITON SEEMED MODERATELY PLEASED THAT THINGS MIGHT BE MOVING AT LAST.

7. CONSUL PLANS VISIT CHARITON AGAIN TODAY, MAY 23.
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